

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-9 (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method for electronically initiating payment of an amount owed to a vendor from a local electronic payment processing interface at a customer computer system regardless of whether the vendor utilizes an electronic payment technology, the method comprising ~~steps for~~:

providing the customer computer system ~~having access to~~ comprising an electronic accounting application and the local electronic payment processing interface;

receiving electronic print data at the local electronic payment processing interface from the electronic accounting application;

~~initiating generation of using the print data to selectively generate an electronic payment file at the local electronic payment processing interface~~ customer computer system to pay an amount owed to the vendor;

selectively transmitting the electronic payment file from the customer computer system local electronic payment processing interface to a third-party electronic payment processing center for the, ~~wherein the step for transmitting the electronic payment file initiates payment of the amount owed to the vendor~~; and

~~using~~ receiving the electronic payment file at the third-party electronic payment processing center to effectuate the payment of the amount owed to the vendor regardless of whether the vendor utilizes an electronic payment through electronic payment technology, ~~wherein the step for using the third party electronic payment processing center to effectuate the payment comprises steps for using an electronic payment~~

technology when available; and using through a printed check when no electronic payment technology is available.

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11. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the step for receiving the electronic payment file at the third-party electronic payment processing center to effectuate the payment of the amount owed to the vendor regardless of whether the vendor utilizes an electronic payment through electronic payment technology when available and through ~~using~~ a printed check when no electronic payment technology is available comprises a step for using a printing device at the electronic payment processing center to effectuate payment of the amount owed to the vendor responsive to receipt of the electronic payment file at the third-party electronic payment processing center when no electronic payment technology is available from the local electronic payment processing interface.

12. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the step for receiving the electronic payment file at the third-party electronic payment processing center to effectuate the payment of the amount owed to the vendor regardless of whether the vendor utilizes an electronic payment through ~~using an~~ electronic payment technology when available comprises steps for:

generating an ACH file at the third-party electronic payment processing center from the electronic payment file received from the local electronic payment processing interface; and

using the ACH file to effectuate the payment of the amount owed to the vendor responsive to the electronic payment file received from the local electronic payment processing interface when electronic payment technology is available.

13. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 12, ~~wherein the step for using an electronic payment technology when available further comprises steps for~~comprising:

providing a financial account number of a financial institution that corresponds to the vendor for receiving the payment, wherein the financial institution is electronically coupled to the third-party electronic payment processing center; and

receiving the ACH file at the financial institution from the third-party electronic payment processing center.

14. (Previously Added) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the electronic payment file comprises remittance data, an invoice number, an invoice date, an invoice description, an invoice amount, a check date, a check number, a check amount, a payee name, and a payee address.

15. (Cancel)

16. (Cancel)

17. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim ~~16~~10, wherein the electronic payment file in an ASCII text data format.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for using a local electronic payment processing interface coupled to a local electronic accounting application to effectuate ~~third-party electronic payment processing system in effectuating a~~ payment of an amount owed to a vendor responsive to an electronic payment file received from a customer, regardless of whether the vendor or a financial institution of the vendor employs electronic data exchange for payment processing, the method comprising steps for:

providing a customer computer system having the electronic accounting application and the local electronic payment processing interface;

receiving electronic print data at the local electronic payment processing interface from the electronic accounting application;

using the print data to selectively generate an electronic payment file at the local electronic payment processing interface;

selectively transmitting the electronic payment file from the local electronic payment processing interface to receiving at a third-party electronic payment processing system an electronic request from a customer computer system to effectuate the payment of the amount owed by the customer to the vendor regardless of whether the vendor or a financial institution of the vendor employs electronic data exchange for payment processing, wherein the request includes an electronic payment file initiated by the customer computer system; and using the third-party electronic payment processing center to effectuate the payment of the amount owed by the customer to the vendor regardless of whether the vendor or a financial institution of the vendor employs electronic data exchange for payment processing, wherein the step for using the third-

~~party electronic payment processing center to effectuate payment comprises is~~
dynamically effecutated by one of the steps for:

using an electronic payment technology to effectuate the payment when
the electronic payment technology is employed for financial data exchange by at
least one of (i) the vendor and (ii) a financial institution of the vendor; and

generating and providing a printed check on behalf of the user to
effectuate the payment when no electronic payment technology is employed to
enable a financial data exchange by the vendor and the financial institution of the
vendor.

19. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 18, wherein the step for using
an electronic payment technology to effectuate the payment when the electronic payment
technology is employed for financial data exchange by at least one of (i) the vendor and (ii) a
financial institution of the vendor further comprises a step for generating an ACH file to
automatically effectuate the payment ~~by the third party electronic payment processing system on
behalf of the customer~~ of the amount owed to the vendor responsive to the electronic payment
file received from the ~~customer computer system~~ local electronic payment processing interface.

20. (Previously Added) A method as recited in claim 18, wherein the electronic
payment file comprises remittance data, an invoice number, an invoice date, an invoice
description, an invoice amount, a check date, a check number, a check amount, a payee name,
and a payee address.

21. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 18, wherein the electronic payment file ~~was generated on the customer computer system from accounting information and an electronic accounting application, and wherein the electronic payment file is~~ in an ASCII text data format.
